



Sky Events Calendar • February, March, & April 2019

All times listed are in Central Standard Time or Central Daylight Time, according to the time in effect on that date.

For more information, call the Museum at 337-291-5544 and ask to speak with someone in the planetarium. Some of these objects and events can be seen during Planetarium star parties — check the Museum web site to see a list of star parties and other events hosted by the Planetarium. Reminders of some of these events will appear on the Lafayette Science Museum Facebook page as the dates approach.

The Internet and media wildly over-hype non-events like “super moons” and “blue moons” and even some actual events like meteor showers. We’ll give you more realistic information!

- February 2:** Just before dawn look for **Saturn** (as bright as a bright star) with brilliant **Venus** above it and very bright Jupiter above Venus. The **crescent moon** will be between Saturn and Venus.
- February 3:** If you are an early riser, go out about 5:30 a.m. to find brilliant **Venus** in the southeast. Center it in a pair of binoculars. The scattering of stars above it and to the left will be the star cluster **Messier 23** about 2100 light years distant. Lower the binoculars until Venus is at the top of the view, then look to the bottom for the soft glow of **Messier 8**, a star forming nebula about 5200 light years distant. There will only be about a half hour of viewing before twilight begins! You can do this for the next several mornings, but the position of Venus relative to the Messier objects will change as Venus orbits the sun. Venus will pass several **Messier objects** in the first half of February.
- February 7:** In the last darkness before dawn, look at **Venus** through binoculars. Can you see the star cluster **Messier 25** off to its left? That cluster is about 2000 light years distant.
- February 9:** For the next several mornings, use binoculars in the last darkness before dawn to see **Venus** in the same view as the globular star cluster **Messier 22**, which lies about 10,400 light years distant.
- February 10:** The moderately bright starlike object **near the moon** tonight will be **Mars**.
- February 12** As the sky gets dark tonight, look at moderately bright Mars in the west with binoculars. Although it’s much dimmer than Mars, the brightest of the starlike objects immediately to the **left of Mars** will be **Uranus**. They will be almost close enough together to be seen in the same low power telescope view, making this an relatively easy night to find Uranus. It will be starlike with a slight green cast but will not show a disk without significant magnification.
- February 13 – 23:** During this time **Venus** and **Saturn** will appear in the same binocular view during morning twilight.
- February 13:** Binocular observers can spot **the moon among the stars of the Hyades star cluster** early tonight. Telescope observers can see some occultations (when the moon temporarily blocks a star from view). There will be an occultation of faint stars shortly after 9:15 and again just after 10:15 p.m., with both stars reappearing from behind the lighted part of the moon between 10:30 and 11:00 p.m. The bright star in the cluster is called Aldebaran.
- February 15 – March 6:** Watch for the planet **Mercury** low in the western sky as the first stars come out during evening twilight. It will be the brightest starlike object in that area.
- February 27:** The very bright starlike object **near the moon** before dawn will be **Jupiter**. They will make a striking sight in binoculars.
- February 28:** Look at the **moon** using binoculars during pre-dawn darkness this morning. As you move the binoculars to put the moon into different parts of the view, watch for distant **star clusters** and faint **nebulae**.
- March 1:** The bright starlike object **near the moon** before dawn will be **Saturn**.

March 2: The bright starlike object *near the moon* before dawn will be *Venus*.

March 11: The brightest starlike object *near the moon* tonight will be *Mars*.

March 20: The *March equinox* will be at 4:58 p.m., officially beginning Spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

March 24 – April 6: Look in the west as the sky gets dark during this period for moderately bright *Mars*. It will be in the same binocular view with *the Pleiades (or Seven Sisters) star cluster*, a striking sight!

March 25 – April 25: This is a good time to look for *Mercury* during morning twilight. It will look like a moderately bright starlike object low in the east.

March 26 & 27: The very bright starlike object *near the moon* before dawn will be *Jupiter*.

March 29: The bright starlike object *near the moon* before dawn will be *Saturn*.

April 2: Look low in the southeast during morning twilight for the *thin crescent moon*. The very bright starlike object above it will be *Venus* and dimmer *Mercury* will be to the moon's left.

April 7 – 25: *Venus* and *Mercury* will be in the same binocular view during morning twilight.

April 8: The thin crescent *moon*, moderately bright *Mars*, and *the Pleiades* star cluster will make a pretty triangle for unaided eye viewers as the sky darkens tonight. At the same time, Mars, the moon, and the bright star Aldebaran will make another triangle. The colors of Mars and Aldebaran will make an interesting comparison.

April 13: The approximately half *moon* and the *Beehive Star Cluster* will be in the same binocular view this evening but the brightness of the moon may make the star cluster challenging to see.

April 23: The very bright starlike object *near the moon* between midnight and dawn will be *Jupiter*.

April 25: The bright starlike object *near the moon* in the pre-dawn sky will be *Saturn*.